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THE KINGDOM OF GOD: A SYMPOSIUM.

THE editors of the BIBLICAL WORLD, judging that the opinion of prominent New Testament scholars and friends of social reform as regards the meaning of the term "kingdom of God" would be of value, asked replies to the following questions:

(1) Does the term, as used by Jesus, have a social content or does it have reference solely to conduct and a condition of one's spiritual life?

(2) Is the term primarily or exclusively eschatological?

(3) What are the three or four best discussions of the subject?

The following replies have been received:

(1) The term "kingdom of God," in the teaching of Jesus, does not have reference solely to the spiritual life or the ethical conduct of the individual. Its broadest and most general definition is a state of loyalty to God, and this is sometimes by him applied to the individual who is described as being in the kingdom of God, or being a child of the kingdom, whatever the social conditions by which he is surrounded. It is sometimes applied by him to the community, as in the prayer: "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

(2) The term is neither primarily nor exclusively eschatological. It includes the future life of perfected loyalty to God, but it is primarily the state of loyalty on this earth.

LYMAN ABBOTT.

NEW YORK.

I conceive the term "the kingdom of God," as used in the teaching of Jesus, to refer primarily to the realization of a relationship between the individual soul and God, the relationship of a child to the father. But it seems very clear that this controlling relation involves such issues in the conduct of the indi-

vidual toward his fellows as to give to the conception a large social content, and that this social result is essential to the realization of the kingdom of God—the filial relation of the individual soul to God being the means by which the larger kingdom is to find its realization.

As Jesus used the term, it cannot be said to be primarily eschatological in significance. He seems to blend together the doctrine of a kingdom present already in the world and growing to an ever fuller realization of its idea, with the prospect of a final consummation inaugurating the complete supremacy of the kingdom over all opposition.

The most satisfactory discussion I have met is that of Wendt, *The Teaching of Jesus*, Vol. I, 173–408. I have also found Bruce, *The Kingdom of God*, and Mathews, *The Social Teaching of Jesus*, 40–78, very useful.

RUSH RHEES.

THE NEWTON THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTION.

The best definition I have ever seen is that of Elisha Mulford in *The Republic of God*, which is “the realization of righteousness in the life of humanity.” I think it has both a sociological and an eschatological content, but it refers chiefly to a state to be realized on this earth. Among writings on this subject I have found Elisha Mulford’s discussions very valuable. A little primer by F. Herbert Stead is similarly valuable, as is also the larger book by F. D. Maurice, and, of course, Wendt and Bruce.

AMORY H. BRADFORD.

MONTCLAIR, N. J.

“The kingdom of God,” in the teaching of Jesus, stands for that reign of God which Jesus inaugurated. It is coextensive with God’s dominion over men and includes all that is involved in this dominion, whether it be religious, ethical, political, economic, or recreative. Jesus introduced the kingdom on earth, yet it is ever to come in richer measure and more perfect form. Being a kingdom, the idea is collective, but individuals are the factors of the collectivity. It is both internal and external, temporal in its earthly manifestations and yet eternal, in this world

and yet of heaven and destined to completion in heaven. To this new theocracy no truth, no emotion, no activity, related to man as a spiritual being, is foreign.

J. H. W. STUCKENBERG.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

I understand Jesus to have preached a genuine kingdom, which was constituted originally by the association with himself and with each other of disciples who accepted his message and realized the supreme blessing of conscious divine sonship which he had come to mediate. There was thus a social element in the kingdom from the beginning. It meant not simply individual consciousness of divine sonship on the renovation of the individual life, but the association of the disciples of Christ.

The kingdom in Jesus' thought was apparently both present and future. It was constituted when he began to gather disciples about himself, and was to continue after his departure and after his return at the time of the final consummation. Jesus thus retained the eschatological element in the Jewish thought of the kingdom, but added to it the conception of the kingdom as a present reality.

Among the best recent discussions of the subject I should put Wendt's *Lehre Jesu*, Baldensperger's *Selbstbewusstsein Jesu*, Toy's *Judaism and Christianity*, chap. 6, Issel's *Die Lehre vom Reiche Gottes im N. T.*, and J. Weiss' *Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes*.

ARTHUR CUSHMAN MCGIFFERT.

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"The kingdom of God" is not primarily an eschatological idea in the teaching of Jesus, although it has, in some passages, an eschatological application. This application is quite natural in view of Jesus' teaching, which represents the kingdom as a growing affair. It is the progressive reign of God in the personal and social life of humanity, and is consummated only in the heavenly life. But the kingdom is already present in its imperfect and developing form, and, indeed, has always been in the world, so far as men have known and obeyed the will of

God. With Paul "the kingdom of God" is used predominantly in an eschatological sense. This is quite natural in view of Paul's doctrine of the parousia.

"The kingdom" is certainly a social conception. This conclusion is clear, from the fact that it is the kingdom *of God* or *of heaven*. It is the reign of divine truths, law, and life. God is the father of *humanity*, and the heavenly life is essentially social. The same view results from a consideration of the conditions of entering the kingdom, such as meekness, mercifulness, and peace-making, which are social, as well as personal, virtues.

GEORGE B. STEVENS.

YALE UNIVERSITY.

The term "kingdom of God" has not a constant meaning in the teaching of Jesus. In one group of passages the predominant idea is "the rule of God" (*e. g.*, Matt. 6:10); in a second group it denotes primarily "the company of those who are under the divine rule" (*e. g.*, Matt. 13:24-30); in a third group it denotes "the privileges of those who are under the divine rule" (*e. g.*, Matt. 21:43); and in a fourth group of passages it denotes "the place to be occupied in the future age by those who are under the divine rule" (*e. g.*, Matt. 8:11).

The kingdom of heaven in the sense of "the rule of God" is exclusively spiritual. It is realized wholly from within, never from without. The conception is individual, not social. Right social and political relations are natural consequences of "the rule of God."

The kingdom of God in the sense of "the company of those who are under the divine rule" is the equivalent of "church" in Matt. 16:18, but neither term has any outward organization in the teaching of Jesus.

The kingdom of heaven as used in the fourth group of passages is, of course, eschatological.

GEORGE H. GILBERT.

CHICAGO THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

The "kingdom of God" is, essentially, the absolute dominion of God in the universe. The principle of its existence is the

will of God. The only approach to a concrete definition is Matt. 6:10. Christ took the current Messianic idea, stripped it of its Jewish limitations, and expanded and spiritualized it. In his teaching, the kingdom of God is the real consummation of the prophetic idea of the rule of God, without national limitation. It is the combination of all rights of Christian citizenship in this world, and eternal blessedness in the next. All its senses are only different sides of the same great idea, the subjection of all things to God in Christ.

This kingdom is, primarily, spiritual: a moral condition rather than a visible institution. Its inheritance is conditioned on spiritual states and qualities. Wherever God's righteousness is, in the individual or in society, there is the kingdom of God. It has a righteousness peculiar to itself. Its spirit is opposed to the spirit of the world. Its rewards are not allotted according to worldly standards.

The kingdom of God is both present and future. As a present kingdom, it is incomplete, and in process of development. It has a power of expansion, and a power of pervasion. It grows by its own inherent energy, and according to its own law. Its processes are secret and mysterious.

In its present stage, it is not identical with the church. It implies and involves organization, and the church is, ideally, its representative. But it is a larger spiritual movement, which includes the church. The church is where the kingdom is, but the kingdom is not always where the church is. The true church is limited to those who seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

The kingdom of God is also future. In its consummation, its outward manifestation will perfectly correspond with its internal principle. It will be a perfect society, of which Christ will be the king and head, and love to God the law.

UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

MARVIN R. VINCENT.

So far as I can see, the teaching of Jesus as to the "kingdom of God" makes no distinction between spirituality and social morality. In fact, Jesus asserts that the last to enter into the

kingdom will be those who insist upon keeping up this distinction. Religion to him stands for loving relationship. To serve men, in their common, felt, daily interests, was to him of kindred religious value with the service of God.

The kingdom of God is clearly an affair of the coming earthly race, though, of course, exhibiting the same principles as govern the heavenly life. The social motive which it presents is much more strongly urged in the teaching of Jesus than that based upon the hope of individual immortality.

The only authority I know at first hand is Weiss, *Biblical Theology*.

ROBERT A. WOODS.

BOSTON, MASS.

According to my interpretation of the gospels, Christ's teaching about the "kingdom of God" was intended to fill the phrase, derived from the Old Testament and current with many misconceptions in later Judaism, with such content as would make it express his doctrine of the nature, processes, and results of a truly religious life. His specific affirmations about it must be understood in the light of certain fundamental principles of his teaching—such as that men need entire moral renovation in order to do God's will; that the formative element of right living is the truth which he came to reveal; that he himself is the mediator through whom the renewing truth and power are given; and that a truly religious life includes the establishment and subsequent working out of right relations, first toward God and then toward mankind. Hence, Christ represents "the kingdom" as a spiritual community, established by him in this world on the basis of sincere acceptance of the revealed will of God, and consisting of truth-informed lives which individually and gradually bring forth these results, of all kinds, which are the appropriate fruits of his truth, but which are also *united* by the possession in common of a spiritual life derived from him, so that the whole organism, as well as its individual members, grows and bears fruit. This kingdom, however, will not in the present age become perfect, nor will it entirely exclude from the world the kingdom of Satan; but in the future world, after the

judgment, it will be perfectly established. It has, therefore, a social content in so far as right relations between men are among the fruits of the truth out of which the kingdom grows ; also in so far as it is a spiritual community, and therefore necessarily social, which is intended to control all human relations and activities. It is not, however, contemplated by Christ as a separate *external* social organism, monopolizing within itself the social activities of men, but as a spiritual community whose principles will be manifested in all external social relations and organizations. The principal stress, however, is laid by Christ, not upon the social aspect of the kingdom, but upon the relation to God which is its fundamental characteristic. Neither is his description of the kingdom primarily, much less exclusively, eschatological. It is, primarily, religious and ethical ; but it includes, and toward the later part of his ministry increasingly emphasizes, an eschatological outlook wherein its ideal is represented as perfectly realized.

GEORGE T. PURVES.

PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

The preaching of the "kingdom of God" by Jesus is, I think, not to be detached from his central revelation of the life of God in the soul of man. Nothing could be less accurate than to think of Jesus as primarily a social reformer, or organizer, or revolutionist. The message to which he felt himself peculiarly called made him indeed extraordinarily reticent about changes in social organization. He is not a reformer, he is a revealer. But what would happen, one may ask, if the revelation he offers could thoroughly possess his followers? In answering that question Jesus utilizes the social ideal and expectation of his own people. The Hebrew hope was eschatological, and it was almost inevitable that the reports of the sayings of Jesus would be colored by this view (Matt. 25:31). Further, Jesus speaks of at least two distinct aspects of the kingdom as he conceived it: as received in the form of truth, and as entered into in the form of life. (Beyschlag, *New Testament Theology*, I, 49; Wendt, *Teaching of Jesus*, I, 375.) But when one considers the total impression to be derived from the teaching of

Jesus, the kingdom of God certainly seems to have been in his mind not a remote Utopia, or a political rule, or even a church, but a spiritual brotherhood, potentially present and world-subduing (Luke 17:21; Shailer Mathews, *The Social Teaching of Jesus*, p. 70). It has come through the elevation of the world by the transforming potency of the life hid with Christ in God. It is the world as it would be if his hope for the individual could be fulfilled. The perfect social order would be the corollary of the perfectly consecrated will. For their sakes sanctify yourself.

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MARY MAGDALENE—HOFMANN